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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000011

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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, AND EUR/SCE, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN FOR  
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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: BROAD-BASED, MULTI-ETHNIC GOVERNMENT  
APPROVED IN KOSOVO

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On January 9 the newly constituted Kosovo Assembly, reflecting the coalition agreement between the PDK and LDK parties, overwhelmingly elected PDK leader Hashim Thaci as Prime Minister and approved his cabinet by 88 votes out of a total 120. Thaci got an extra boost as Bexhet Pacolli's New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) party, in the opposition, also voted in favor of the new government. The Assembly, on the third ballot and by simple majority vote, also re-elected President Sejdiu to a new five-year mandate by a fairly good margin (68/120); Sejdiu was not able to get the required two-thirds majority needed to win on either of the first two ballots. The Assembly also approved PDK Secretary General Jakup Krasniqi as Assembly Speaker. The seven-hour long proceedings were remarkably orderly and calm, but not without some drama -- Ramush Haradinaj's AAK party, disgruntled at being left out of government, challenged Sejdiu by putting up its own candidate for president. Its deputy chairman also bitterly criticized the PDK-LDK coalition as "unnatural and contradictory."

¶2. (C) SUMMARY (cont'd): Hashim Thaci, whose burning desire always has been to be prime minister, is facing more than he bargained for: the daunting task of leading Kosovo through what will likely be the most important chapter in its modern history. He made an auspicious beginning in handing two serious ministries to Serbs and one more to a Turk, and he made a point of reaching out to Serbs in his acceptance speech at the session. Several members of his cabinet are well and favorably known to us; we will work to maintain those relationships and develop new ones, such as with little-known Energy Minister Pula-Shiroka. END SUMMARY.

Some Surprises, But Proceedings Generally Calm, Orderly

¶3. (C) Coming out of the November 17 central elections, the Kosovo Assembly elected its Speaker and Presidency along with Kosovo's President, Prime Minister, and government during a marathon seven-hour session on January 9. (Septels contain bios of PM Thaci, Assembly Speaker Krasniqi, and the new ministers.) The session began two hours late, partly because of the need to carefully coordinate the complexities of electing Assembly officials, the President, and the

government in one day, and partly because parties continued to hash out their political plans until the last minute. The first vote, 88 to one (out of a total 120 MPs although not all were present), easily elected the Assembly Presidency, and PDK designated its secretary general, Jakup Krasniqi, as Speaker; Krasniqi chaired the remainder of the session.

(NOTE: Per Kosovo's Constitutional Framework (CF), the Assembly Presidency consists of eight members - two each from the top two parties (PDK's Krasniqi and Xhavit Haliti and LDK's Eqrem Kryeziu and Sabri Hamiti), one each from the next two largest parties (AKR's Ibrahim Gashi and LDD president Nexhat Daci), one Serb (to be determined), and one non-Serb minority (rotating). Because it came in fifth in the elections, Ramush Haradinaj's AAK did not earn a seat on the Presidency. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) As planned, Speaker Krasniqi then announced President Sejdiu's resignation, required before he could stand for re-election, and Eqrem Kryeziu nominated Sejdiu as the coalition's candidate for President of Kosovo. In a surprise move previewed to us only hours before, AAK chose to nominate a counter-candidate, AAK second vice president Naim Maloku, with 25 MP signatures as required by the CF. The very act of doing this was a significant challenge to Sejdiu, since a two-thirds vote is necessary for election of the President on the first two ballots; a third ballot can be won by a simple majority of 61 votes. (COMMENT: The AAK's motivation was likely retaliation for Sejdiu and the LDK "abandoning" them and joining up with PDK. END COMMENT.)

Sejdiu Wins on Third Ballot

¶5. (C) In the first round of voting, 62 voted for Sejdiu, 37

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for Maloku, and 16 voided their ballots. In the second round, Sejdiu lost one vote, earning just 61, and 17 were invalid. Krasniqi called for a break after the second round, during which the LDK, PDK, and AAK caucuses met privately. After re-convening, Sejdiu was elected with 68 votes, a comfortable margin for a convincing mandate. (COMMENT: From the vote, it was apparent that not all PDK and LDK MPs supported Sejdiu. Within LDK there are MPs resentful that they did not receive ministerial posts, while some in the PDK still oppose the whole notion of coalition with the LDK. During the pause, USOP COM and poloff met with key LDK and PDK MPs to remind them of what was at stake if Kosovo ended the day without a President or a government, a move that helped break the logjam in the third round of voting. END COMMENT.)

Thaci Government Overwhelmingly Elected

¶6. (C) The rest of the session went according to plan. President Sejdiu nominated Thaci for Prime Minister and invited him to present his cabinet nominees and program. After he did so, individual delegates took the floor to comment on or criticize the proposed coalition. Most opposition members took a reasonably positive approach, with AKR's Pacolli saying he would support Thaci "because the people of Kosovo voted for him," and LDD's Besa Gaxherri promising to be constructive on matters of national interest.

However, AAK's acting president Ahmet Isufi, perhaps in an unwise bid to justify challenging Sejdiu earlier in the day, was uncharacteristically and surprisingly shrill in his denunciation of both LDK and PDK, calling LDK's "abandonment" of the AAK "an insult." Even other AAK members speaking after him seemed to realize this was a mistake and were more conciliatory. Serb MP Slobodan Petrovic, leader of the Serb Independent Liberal Party (SLS) and part of the LDK/PDK coalition, made a commendable speech, acknowledging that while he and his party could not share the goal of independence for Kosovo, it was a mistake for Kosovo Serbs to stand outside the governing institutions; he congratulated Sejdiu and Thaci and pledged to help make the new government a success. After various interventions, the vote proceeded

on the new government: 85 in favor, 22 against. (NOTE: In a welcome move, Pacolli's AKR voted in favor of the new government; in a less welcome move, LDK's irascible Melihate Termkolli alone joined the rest of the opposition in voting against. END NOTE.)

#### Thaci Promises To Be PM For All Kosovars

17. (U) In his various interventions during the day, Thaci repeatedly pledged to govern on behalf of all citizens of Kosovo, regardless of ethnicity, and during his acceptance speech spoke a few sentences in Serbian, assuring Serbs that they continued to have a home in Kosovo and asserting the right of all displaced Serbs to return to Kosovo and live in peace and security.

#### COMMENT

18. (C) Despite some tense moments, the new Assembly's first real day of work was an unqualified success, and a broad-based, multi-ethnic government is now in place in Kosovo. The entire day was conducted, despite the political drama, in a calm, orderly fashion in line with UNMIK and international democratic standards. SRSR Ruecker summed up international feeling when he, as the last to address the Assembly, said that Kosovo had again demonstrated it was "ready for the next level".

19. (C) COMMENT (cont'd): That said, PM Thaci will have his hands full as he leads Kosovo at probably the most important period in its modern history -- the final lap to independence. The cabinet he has assembled contains several names well and favorably known to us, but others -- some in key ministries -- are almost complete unknowns, including new Energy Minister Pula-Shiroka. We will engage at all levels to help bring the new government up to full capability as

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quickly as possible, and also to articulate major priorities, including preparation of the draft constitution and Ahtisaari legislative measures. End comment.  
KAIDANOW